I. Introduction

1. This Update on the UNHCR programme for repatriation to Afghanistan outlines the policies and objectives for activities during 1995 and indicates the financial requirements to achieve the stated objectives. Preparation of this report was necessitated by the conclusion of the Executive Committee for UNHCR on Afghanistan and the subsequent strategic planning meeting held in Jalalabad on 7 November, where the framework and parameters of UNHCR's activities in Afghanistan were defined. The programme described in this report updates UNHCR's component on voluntary repatriation in the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Emergency Humanitarian Assistance for Afghanistan covering the period 1 October 1994 - 30 September 1995. Elements of the Appeal which relate to assistance to internally displaced persons are under assessment and will be the subject of a future joint UNOCHA/UNHCR report.

2. The UNHCR programme for repatriation of Afghan refugees commenced in 1989 at the time of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Following the high level of return of refugees to Afghanistan in the spring and summer of 1992, repatriation movements have continued although at levels lower than anticipated. After more than five years of UNHCR-assisted repatriation, the original refugee population of over six million in neighboring countries has decreased to less than three million in Pakistan and Iran (1.2 and 1.7 million, respectively). The current programme represents a new approach which will extend for a three-year period. It is anticipated that by the end of 1997 the UNHCR presence in Afghanistan will be progressively phased down in favour of development oriented agencies of the UN.

3. In parallel with the return of refugees, the displacement of the civilian population of Kabul caused by factional fighting has assumed alarming proportions. There are now an estimated one million Afghans displaced in different parts of the country with over 300,000 receiving international assistance in camps established in Jalalabad and northern Afghanistan.

4. The outbreak of civil war in Tajikistan in late 1992 led to an influx of some 60,000 Tajik refugees into northern Afghanistan. A combination of organized and spontaneous return during 1993 and 1994 resulted in a significant reduction of this number. Currently, there are approximately 18,000 Tajik refugees in the provinces of Balkh and Kunduz. With the likelihood of greater access by UNHCR to Tajik refugees in Kunduz, it should prove easier to assess the willingness of the remaining 12,000 refugees in that area to return home. Voluntary repatriation will continue to be pursued as the most viable solution for this population. However, as uncertainties prevail over the possible rapprochement between the government and the opposition in Tajikistan, prospects for return will be complemented by the pursuit of opportunities for local settlement and self reliance of the remaining population.

II. Objectives and Strategies

5. The UNHCR repatriation programmes during 1992-1994 assisted over half the Afghan refugee population to return by providing a grant of cash and food to facilitate their travel and reintegration. The remaining refugees, however, have fewer skills and resources than earlier returnees and the communities to which they will return have received less attention from the UN agencies and NGOs to ensure successful reintegration. Despite the ongoing conflict in Kabul, much of the countryside where the refugees will return has been relatively stable. Following the recommendations of the regional Tripartite Commissions for Repatriation to Afghanistan and the conclusion of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's programmes, UNHCR will increase its presence and programmes in Afghanistan to encourage regional stability and support continued return.

> *Objective: To intensify the activities of UNHCR in the safe areas of Afghanistan so as to create conditions conducive for the return of refugees and displaced persons to their places of origin.*

6. Today, different categories of populations of concern to UNHCR are to be found in many parts of Afghanistan. In northern Afghanistan, Tajik refugees are scattered alongside displaced persons from Kabul and returnees from Iran and Pakistan. Similarly, in Herat, Jalalabad, Mazar-i-Sharif and Kandahar large numbers of returnees and displaced persons compete for meagre resources and exert pressure on the already inadequate infrastructure. Quite often, assisting one group to the exclusion of others has led to misunderstandings with the authorities and creates resentment among the populations concerned. These realities compel UNHCR to take a holistic approach in assessing the needs and general conditions of the refugees, returnees and IDPs.

> *Objective: To enable reintegration and support repatriation through protection and assistance activities which focus on situations involving one or more categories of populations of concern to UNHCR in places where the lack of basic services and infrastructure restrict economic opportunities.*

7. The "situation analysis" approach will thus concurrently address the protection concerns of UNHCR by creating an effective relationship between assistance and protection. Monitoring the safety of return and the process of reintegration will continue to be undertaken by existing field presence within Pakistan and Iran, at major border crossing points to Afghanistan and within communities of return where rehabilitation activities have been initiated.

> *Objective: To identify obstacles to repatriation and protection as they occur by incorporating a system of monitoring activities throughout the return and reintegration process and to intervene with the relevant authorities with a view to obtaining corrective remedies.*

8. Although repatriation trends have continued to decline during 1993 and 1994, there are indications that the rate of return could increase markedly in 1995. This can be partly explained by economic conditions in the neighboring countries which have provided generous support to Afghan refugees during their long exile.

> Objective: *To facilitate voluntary repatriation, with increased recognition of the needs of vulnerable persons, through the provision of direct assistance at time of departure and by responding to essential needs in an attempt to promote successful reintegration.*

9. An essential part of a viable strategy vis-a-vis the IDPs is geared to prevention. The resumption of missions to Kabul and the recent dispatch of humanitarian convoys to the city have been important steps in addressing the problem at its source and reducing the outflow of civilians seeking assistance.

> Objective: *To reduce the displacement of civilian populations to the extent that conditions allow through preventive initiatives which contribute to the establishment of regional stability and the return of viable living conditions.*

As more possibilities open up for the delivery of assistance to Kabul, it will be possible to shift emphasis away from concentrating resources in camps in Jalalabad.

10. With regard to the Tajik refugees in northern Afghanistan, UNHCR will continue to facilitate repatriation of the remaining caseload. A UNHCR presence in Kunduz and Takhar is intended to open a direct channel of communication with the refugees in the area which will enable them to make an informed decision on repatriation.

> Objective: *To pursue opportunities for increased contact with refugee communities and ensure minimal standards are met while continuing to promote durable solutions.*

III. Outline of the UNHCR Programme for Repatriation and Reintegration

11. UNHCR has developed the institutional capacity to increase confidence and foster a sense of stability for a population undergoing transition. Through maintaining a presence in certain key areas, UNHCR can contribute to the establishment of stability and the return of viable living conditions, which are pre-requisites for the sustainable return of refugees and their re-integration. Similarly, the return of displaced persons to their home areas could be encouraged in the same way. Such presence allows an assessment of the situation to be followed up with rapid intervention, thereby preparing the ground for the entry of other UN agencies and NGOs to ensure subsequent rehabilitiation takes place to boost the chances of successful reintegration. The outreach programme described in the following sections is designed with this objective in mind.

12. Reactivation of the office in Kabul constitutes an essential component to the expansion of UNHCR's presence in Afghanistan. Several missions involving UNHCR international staff have been undertaken to Kabul since early November. While UNHCR cannot envisage an independent programme in favor of the population of Kabul, it can nevertheless provide complementary support to the programmes of other UN agencies such as WFP and Habitat (UNCHS). A combined UN presence would put increased pressure on the warring sides to cease hostilities and encourage rapprochement. The civilian population would benefit from the UN presence psychologically as well as materially. It would also allow the UN to conduct on-the-spot negotiations concerning the safe passage of humanitarian convoys into Kabul.

13. The situation analysis approach requires UNHCR to diversify its sectors of assistance for Afghanistan in order to contribute to the establishment of stability and normalcy in targeted regions. Field experience has demonstrated that in addition to addressing the basic needs of a returnee or displaced population, projects aimed at improving the level and quality of community services can contribute to the establishment and strengthening of civil society in general. Cooperation with other UN agencies and active participation in the Regional Rehabilitation Steering Committee are intended to ensure that development assistance will constitute an integral part of the interventions proposed by UNHCR.

IV. Proposed Activities for 1995

14. The conditions of communities in Afghanistan require increases in UNHCR intervention in order to meet the objectives of consolidating the reintegration of those who have already repatriated and facilitating further return of refugees from Pakistan and Iran. Building on the lessons of the past while acknowledging the constraints and opportunities of the present, UNHCR will implement projects in more sectors and in a wider geographic area during 1995. The following is an outline of the basic tenets which will be applied:

(i) ***Programming and implementing for situations, rather than categories***, will be a major focus in 1995. Geographic areas of intervention have been selected based on past, on-going, and potential return of refugees. Regional operational strategies are being developed which take into consideration the conditions in various returnee areas.

(ii) ***An increased emphasis on implementation of projects in the cities*** is necessitated by the already high number of returnees in urban areas and the likelihood of continued urban migration in the future.

(iii) *Creating opportunities for other UN agencies and NGOs by setting up* a UNHCR presence in geographic areas and taking advantage of other UN agencies' presence in areas where UNHCR is not yet established is an essential element for programme activity in 1995.

(iv) ***UNHCR will include the restoration of cultural and community facilities among the physical rehabilitation projects which are essential for reintegration*** thereby creating and supporting a sense of peace and normalcy in communities receiving returnees.

Geographic Areas

15. Operating from its main office in Islamabad and later, conditions permitting, from Kabul as well as from the four sub-offices in Mazar, Herat, Kandahar, and Jalalabad, UNHCR/Afghanistan will expand the geographic reach of its programmes in 1995. Each sub-office will have regional responsibility for the provinces in the area, although the degree of priority will vary based on returnee demographics. The breakdown of regions to be covered is shown on the map in Annex 1.

Priority Sectoral Activities: REINHABIT

16. In 1995, UNHCR Afghanistan will implement projects in the following sectors: transport, water, sanitation, health, shelter, community services, education, crop production, and income generation. Priority sector will vary from region to region due to different needs and capacities identified. In rural areas experiencing high repatriation in 1995, shelter, water, and crop production will be of highest priority, as they are immediate life-sustaining activities. In urban areas, where the returnee population is better established, sanitation, community services, education, and income generation will be higher priorities. OCM Kabul and the Sub-Offices have identified appropriate sectoral involvement on an area-by-area basis and will continue to do so throughout 1995 as circumstances evolve. The basic principles guiding UNHCR assistance in Afghanistan can be described as follows: Restoring Education and Infrastructure, Nurturing Health and Agriculture, Building Institutions and Trust (REINHABIT).

17. **Restoring Education and Infrastructure:** Under the education sector, UNHCR/Afghanistan will seek to improve and increase access to education in communities receiving a large number of returnees, thus promoting reintegration and encouraging further repatriation. The primary focus will be on rebuilding structures and providing materals (desks, blackboards, etc.) where schooling is already taking place under the auspices of local departments of education. UNHCR will only intervene in education where competent agencies are already involved (or can be encouraged to become involved). Such agencies include UNICEF, NGOs and local authorities. Pilot projects in education were undertaken in Herat province

in 1994, in partnership with UNICEF, WFP and the Department of Education. These projects were highly successful and will be replicated in 1995. Funds and activities under this sector will be directed equally to males and females.

18. Under the transport sector, the restoration of rural infrastructure (roads, small bridges, flood protection structures) will be an essential aspect of the reintegration programme. Routes linking village-to-village and village-to-market are key elements for revitalization of the rural economy. In Afghanistan, war and neglect have left this infrastructure in a pathetic state. UNHCR intervention will enable refugees to return to the rural areas from where they originated and serve as a counter-balance to activities in urban areas which otherwise might serve as magnets for returnees. This sector is important not only for the access that it provides, but also for the income-generation aspect. One major concern of returnees in rural areas is bridging the period of time between preparing the land, planting a crop, and harvesting the crop. The presence of labour-intensive projects (like road repair) will allow one or more men in the family to earn an income during the slack period between planting and the first harvest.

19. Under the shelter sector, assistance with reconstruction of family shelter is recognized as the most basic need of returnee communities. Following the model of the past two years, UNHCR will intervene in this sector for areas experiencing high return.

20. **Nurturing Health and Agriculture:** Under the health sector, UNHCR/ Afghanistan will seek to improve and increase access to basic health facilities in communities of high return, thus promoting reintegration and encouraging further repatriation. The primary focus will be on rebuilding structures and providing necessary materials in both rural and urban areas with a particular emphasis on primary health care and maternal/child health. UNHCR will only intervene where competent agencies, including UNICEF, WHO, NGOs and local authorities, are already involved (or can be encouraged to become involved). Funds and activities under this sector will be directed primarily for women and children.

21. Equally essential to health in returnee communities are activities under the sanitation and drinking water sectors. Sanitation activities will be targeted at urban areas and will focus on restoring and upgrading sewage and waste removal systems. Emphasis will be placed on projects that are sustainable. UNHCR will promote the activities of municipal authorities rather than support one-time interventions.

22. Agriculture is the lifeblood of Afghanistan and subsistence farming is the most common occupation in the country. Assistance to agriculture will be essential to stimulate self sufficiency and reduce prolonged dependancy on food aid. Crop production activities will be undertaken by UNHCR in 1995 through the repair of irrigation (and drainage) systems, mainly canals and karezes. UNHCR will

coordinate its projects with the rural rehabilitation departments of local governments, UNDP/OPS, FAO, and NGOs. Efforts will focus on primary and secondary water sources that benefit large numbers of families and which require repair rather than the rehabilitation of individual family canals which can be undertaken by the families themselves. All projects will be reviewed technically by either UNDP/OPS or FAO prior to implementation.

23. **Building Institutions and Trust:** Building institutions and trust are essential to the reintegration of returnees and encouragement of further return. The strengthening of local authorities and the creation of stable conditions are possible in many parts of Afghanistan, and these are important factors in the decision to return. UNHCR will promote institution building through all its activities, working whenever possible in partnership with local authorities and strengthening them as an integral part of programme implementation. Trust will be created with communities and authorities by addressing essential needs that are unmet by the existing programmes of UN and NGO agencies.

24. Under the community services sector, UNHCR will repair cultural, recreational and public facilities. All activities will be based on sustainability, working closely with local authorities who will maintain facilities after the initial intervention. Funds and activities under this sector will be directed equally at males and females.

25. Under the income generation sector, UNHCR will support training and small business start-up projects. Projects will include carpet-weaving, raising poultry, kitchen gardening, language and computer skills training, etc. Activities under this sector will be directed primarily at women.

Implementing Partners

26. UNHCR will have Quick Impact Project (QIP) agreements with NGOs and small contractors in Afghanistan, all of whom have worked with UNHCR or other UN agencies in the past. On a regional level, it is anticipated that sub-agreements will be signed with International Rescue Committee (IRC), Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA), Save the Children (SC-USA), OXFAM, and Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC). In addition, Memorandums of Understanding or Sub-Agreements will be considered with UNDP/OPS, UNICEF, WHO, and FAO for cooperation/implementation in different sectors and regions. The sub-agreement currently under negotiation with the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) is based upon their highly respected existing programmes and can serve as a model for further cooperation with other NGOs active in particular areas. Under a sub-agreement valued at US$ 600,000, SCA will expand its current activities in the sectors of education, infrastructure, drinking water and health. SCA is currently operating in the northern provinces of Badakshan, Takhar, Kunduz and the eastern

provinces of Paktia and Ghazni. Additional interventions will be targeted at districts chosen by UNHCR. An improved partnership with NGOs will allow UNHCR to expand the reach of its programme into remote areas quickly and effectively.

V. Resource Requirements

27. The attached budget details the financial support required by UNHCR to carry out the activities proposed for repatriation and reintegration during 1995. The total amount, including direct assistance to returnees in Iran and Pakistan, is $35,637,336. The present staffing level for both international and national staff has been maintained. It may be noted that UNHCR programme delivery costs are on the higher side in Afghanistan and Iran due to the lack of implementing partners in these countries and the need for direct implementation of programme activities by UNHCR. This budget is a revision of UNHCR's component on voluntary repatriation in the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Emergency Humanitarian Assistance for Afghanistan released in October 1994.

BUDGET

AFGHANISTAN			
Food	2,500		
Transport/Logistics (including IOM)	2,755,620		
Domestic Needs	375,000		
Drinking Water	920,000		
Sanitation	360,000		
Health	755,000		
Shelter	1,149,668		
Community Services	430,000		
Education	940,000		
Crop Production	655,000		
Income Generation	623,000		
Agency Operational Support Cost	698,577		
Sub-Total		9,664,365	
UNHCR Programme Delivery Cost		3,841,083	
Total Afghanistan			***13,505,448***
IRAN			
Assistance to Returnees (500,000 persons x $25)	12,500,000		
Transport Assistance (IOM)	750,000		
Agency Operational Support Cost	350,000		
Sub-Total		13,600,000	
UNHCR Programme Delivery Cost		2,229,671	
Total Iran			***15,829,671***
PAKISTAN			
Assistance to Returnees (30,000 families x $110)	3,300,000		
Plastic Sheeting	470,000		
Agency Operational Support Cost	1,200,000		
Sub-Total		4,970,000	
UNHCR Programme Delivery Cost		660,000	
Total Pakistan			***5,630,000***
HEADQUARTERS			
UNHCR Programme Delivery Cost			662,217
GRAND TOTAL			**35,637,336**

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR REFUGEES



UPDATE ON THE 1995 REPATRIATION AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMME

FOR AFGHANISTAN

"The Executive Committee invites the High Commissioner, in support of the efforts of the United Nations' Special Mission for Afghanistan and other humanitarian and development agencies, to intensify the activities of her Office in the safe areas of Afghanistan so as to create conditions conducive for the return of refugees and displaced persons to their places of origin."

Conclusion of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme
(October 1994)

February 1995

AFGHANISTAN

